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Practical Handbook
to
pastors, licentiates
and
candidates
for the
Gospel
Ministry

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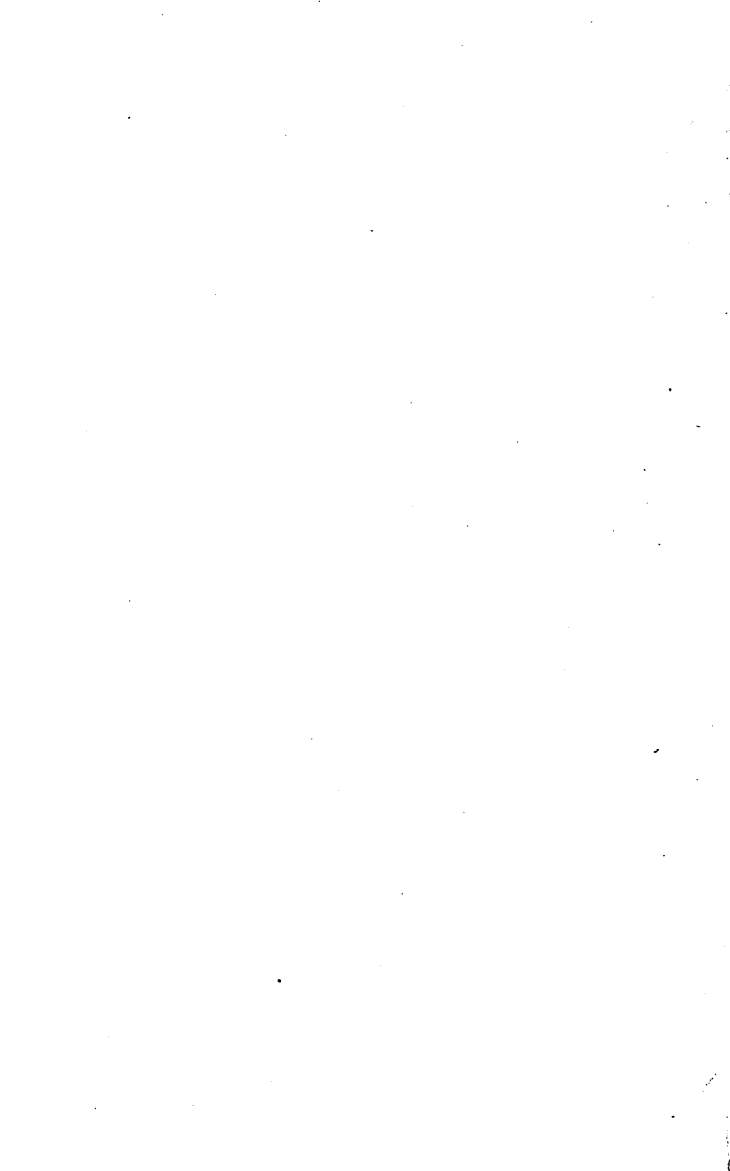
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PRACTICAL HINTS.

DEAR BRETHREN:

THE work that you have in view, or in which you are now actually engaged, is a solemn and a responsible work. It is that of preaching the glorious gospel of the grace of God, of instructing the people from God's word in relation to the most important concerns of this life, and of the life to come. And it becometh you to "study to show" yourselves "approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Tim. ii. 15.

FIRST REQUISITE.

Above all other qualifications for this work, you need a sanctified heart; a heart made anew and softened by the Holy Spirit

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of God ; and a renewed mind, into which ‘God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’ You need to know by *experience* the grace of God, for without such personal experience you can not, in any sense, properly testify of the grace of God to others.

APT TO TEACH.

Every good and devotedly pious man is not called to the work of the ministry ; for all are not, in other important respects, qualified for the work. He that would instruct others must be “*apt to teach.*” 1 Tim. iii. 2. He must possess the power of imparting instruction, or, as it is expressed in the Scriptures, of “rightly dividing the word.” Said Paul to Timothy : “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men,

who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. ii. 2.

Aptness to teach is a gift bestowed by God. But, with all our other gifts, it may be much improved by diligent cultivation, and it is our duty to cultivate this gift, or talent. Paul enjoined upon Timothy to "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," that by these means, his "profit-
ing might appear unto all."

But, to instruct others, we must ourselves possess more knowledge and a better understanding of the subjects to be presented than do those to whom our instructions are given. And this knowledge and understanding we are to *get*. It is not bestowed miraculously. We must search for it, as men search for hid treasure. And he who is unwilling to bestow pains and labor upon the acquisition of knowledge, gives painful evidence that his heart is not fully in the work of preaching the gospel, and should seriously question

whether he has been called of God to this important and solemn work. With the increase of knowledge among the people, there must be a corresponding increase of knowledge on the part of the ministry, or the power of the ministry for good will be very much diminished.

UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES.

Your principal study should be that of the Scriptures—God's holy word. You should study to understand it. The question should ever be in your mind, "Understandest thou what thou readest?"

To understand the Scriptures you need to know how to read them *properly*. By this, I mean you must be able, not only to pronounce the words, but so to read as to get the true and full meaning of the passage read. The proper pauses, as they are marked in each passage, must be regarded; the proper word must be emphasized; and the voice must be

properly modulated, or the reading will be very imperfect, and the profit of reading God's word will be diminished.

These remarks apply equally to the reading of hymns—indeed, to reading of all kinds.

To acquire this power of effective reading, you need the assistance of some minister, or other person of your acquaintance, who has received proper training in this branch of knowledge. Perhaps you know of some such person, who, for the sake of doing good, would assist you. Endeavor to obtain his aid. Use such help with diligence. Give great attention to this matter. It is very important, indeed.

Again, to understand the Scriptures you need to know the *meaning of every word*. An ENGLISH DICTIONARY will give you these meanings. Any kind-hearted person of ordinary education will show you how to use it.

GOD'S WORD EXPLAINS ITSELF.

One portion throws light upon another portion. The New Testament explains the Old Testament by giving the instructions of Jesus Christ and his Apostles upon the Law and the Prophets; and portions of the New Testament explain other portions of the same book.

But how shall you find those passages which explain the portion you are reading or studying?

SPECIAL HELPS.

Good men who have studied God's word in this way, have prepared books as Special Helps to students; so that we have the advantage of their careful studies, and we may, without loss of time, find these explanatory passages.

First among these Helps, I shall mention:
BIBLE REFERENCES.—These are found in

many of the Bibles in common use. They are arranged in single columns on each side of the page, or in double columns in the middle of the page. I will explain their use. We will take the first chapter of Genesis, and the first verse, which reads:

In the *a*beginning God *b*created *a* John 1:1,2.
the heavens and the earth. *b* Heb. 1:10.
Ps. 8:3.
33:6.

The small letter *a* before "beginning," and the *b* before "created," indicate which of the references belong to each portion. A corresponding letter will be found prefixed to the references.

These references, in some instances, are made to passages where only the *same word* is used. In other instances, simply the *same statement* is made. In other instances, the passage referred to *explains* the other passage, giving additional information by entering more into particulars. These distinctions should be kept in mind, lest the mere fact of the same word being used in both passages

should lead you to regard them both as relating to the same subject. They may refer to entirely different subjects.

THE SCRIPTURE CONCORDANCE.—This will enable you to find any passage that comes to your mind, the chapter and verse of which you cannot recall. It is on the plan of a dictionary. Indeed, it is a dictionary of Scripture passages. You will readily use it with very little instruction.

THE SCRIPTURE MANUAL, or a BIBLE TEXT BOOK, will furnish you with all the Scripture passages on a particular subject brought together. If you wish, for instance, to study the subject of FAITH, you will find under that head all the passages relating to it; and thus with all the other important subjects.

THE BIBLE DICTIONARY will give full descriptions of all persons, things, places, etc. etc., mentioned or alluded in the Scriptures.

COMMENTARIES.—Besides the Helps men-

tioned, there are various Commentaries, in which good and learned men give their views of Scripture passages, derived from a careful and prayerful study of them. The fact, however, that commentators often disagree in their interpretation of Scripture, should guard us against receiving their teachings as authoritative. We must ourselves search the Scriptures to see whether their views are according to the law and the testimony. The word of God alone is our authority for views, principles and doctrines. It is our *only rule* for faith and practice.

With a diligent use of these Helps, and God's blessing, you may be quite well prepared to instruct others, and even become able ministers of the New Testament.

A CORRECT IDEA OF PREACHING.

This you may obtain by studying the manner in which the Great Master, who commands his disciples to preach the gospel,

himself preached and taught. By carefully reading his instructions recorded by the Evangelists, you will notice that the Great Preacher aimed to present the truths of the gospel *clearly* and *simply*; and to enforce them upon the mind, conscience and heart of his hearer. He used such language as the most unlearned could readily understand. His illustrations were such as the hearer was familiar with. And his appeals to the conscience and heart were of the most tender and touching character. He, however, denounced in severe terms every sin; and against it, and also the sinner himself, if he repented not, he declared the severe judgments of God.

PRESENT TRUTH CLEARLY.

To present the truth of the gospel clearly, we must avoid covering it up with many words. That is most clearly expressed which is done with only words enough to

set the truth forth. We should put forth the truth that *it* may speak. A light set out in a room will give light to all; but by embedding it in flowers, even though they be of the most beautiful kinds, the light may be as effectually concealed as if it were hid under a bushel. Then the truth of God's word may be covered up and concealed by many words.

ARRANGEMENT OF THOUGHTS AND IDEAS.

The mind of the hearer is to be led from one point to another, just as a person unacquainted with a place is led to it by a friendly hand. A wise guide would not lead him a little way, and then go back a short distance, and again go forward, and yet again return, thus wandering to and fro. Neither, when we would lead the mind, should we wander with it forward and backward. This but confuses the mind, and leaves it in a painful

condition of doubt and hesitation. Every step should be toward the great truth which is being presented. The light which we pour upon it should be like that of the rising sun, which constantly increases in brightness, and more and more clearly reveals objects previously concealed.

There may be many interesting subjects which, with your present limited advantages, it would be impossible for you to present in a methodical and clear manner, because you do not understand them fully yourself. Such subjects you should not attempt to present. It is impossible to present clearly to another's mind what is not clearly grasped by our own mind.

There are deep things of God which the human mind cannot at present fathom. These things, however, do not pertain to our salvation. Those which most concern dying men are the simple truths of the gospel. And these all who are taught by the Spirit

of God can understand. They are matters of Christian experience.

PROPER ILLUSTRATIONS

Will aid you much in preaching the gospel ; and the best illustrations of the truths of the gospel may often be found in the Scriptures—though the works of God in nature, and his providential dealings, furnish an endless variety. The illustrations used should be consistent in character with the subject presented. Those which provoke a smile, or induce levity, should not be used. They should be such as the people addressed are familiar with—such as they can readily admit into their minds—or the benefit of the illustration will be entirely lost. Illustrations are to a subject what pictures are to a book.

CAREFUL PREPARATION.

As careful preparation as is possible should be made. Surely when we are to speak to

men on the all-important subject of the soul's salvation, or to instruct them in regard to the duties of life, we should know what we are to say. How careful would we be to order our words, were we on trial for our life. And upon what we say, may depend the weal or woe of some immortal soul.

MANNER OF PREACHING.

You need to attend to the *manner* in which you preach. Not that you may display your own ability; by no means; but that the word spoken may have the greater power. God works by well-adapted means.

DISTINCT UTTERANCE.—Every word should be distinctly articulated, so that young and old may hear it. To do this it is by no means necessary that you should speak very loudly. Indeed, loud speaking cannot be at all well understood. The word uttered, like the ball from a gun, depends for effect upon reaching the object, and not upon the loud-

ness of the report which accompanies its discharge. A minister, who, in his youthful days, was distinguished for his loud speaking, being asked why, as he became older, he had become more mild in his utterance, replied : "That when he was young, he imagined that it was the *thunder* which killed people ; but he had since learned that it was the *lightning*." Loud and excited speaking may *excite* an audience, but it is not calculated to prick them to the heart.

BE IN EARNEST.—Every preacher of the gospel should himself feel what he says, and be in earnest. But his feelings should be subject to good judgment, and his earnestness should be more evident to the *sight* of his audience than to their hearing. Stamping the feet, beating the cushion with the Bible or the clenched hand, may be practiced when there is really no sincere feeling in the speaker's heart, and no true earnestness in striving to win souls to Christ. True earnestness comes

from a deep compassion for sinners and a deep concern for the glory of Christ.

TENDERNESS OF TONE.—There should be kindness and tenderness in the tone of the voice. This is perfectly consistent with the strictest faithfulness to souls. We should pity sinners. This was characteristic of the Saviour's preaching. His were words of heavenly tenderness. In this respect, he spake as never man spake. The Apostle enjoins that we speak the truth in love. Loving words find their way to the heart, just as the sun's heat melts the ice. They open the door of the heart, while harsh and scolding words close every avenue of approach.

While, however, we pity the poor sinner, we should by no means spare sin. Our denunciations of sin should be faithful and decided. Sin must be exposed. No truce is to be made with it, no quarter given to it. Against it, and him who is guilty of it, we are to declare the judgments of God, who is

angry with the wicked every day. But in doing this, our hearts should weep for those who are the victims of sin.

AID OF THE SPIRIT.

In all your preparation for preaching, and in the delivery of sermons, it should never for one moment be forgotten that the help of the Holy Spirit is constantly needed. It is one of the great blessings which Christ has promised to those who trust in him, that they shall have the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit which has given the word which you are to study and to preach. And the same Spirit which moved holy men of old to write their words, is needed to enable you to understand them, and to speak them so that others also may understand them, and feel their power. A faithful servant of God once said: "I have been so taught the need of the Spirit's help, that I never open the Bible, or any other book which treats of its truths,

without a silent prayer for the assistance of the Spirit, that I may profit by it." If every pastor were to form the same habit, in study and in preaching, both study and preaching would be more profitable to himself and to others.

SINGING IN THE SANCTUARY.

Singing is an important part of public worship. It is a part of the service itself. And care should be taken to have it in harmony with the subject presented in the sermon. The hymns and the sermon should correspond in character. The hymns read and sung will thus aid to prepare the minds of the congregation for the subject, and to impress it more deeply in the memory. And as the truths of the gospel are fully presented in many hymns, they should be carefully read; for the poet's words may be as an arrow shot at a venture. Often during the reading and singing of a suitable hymn, souls are made to yeild to God.

PUBLIC PRAYER.

Nor should we overlook the public prayer. In this we lead the hearts and minds of the worshipper. We utter not only our own thoughts and feelings, but we speak for others. We are their mouth. We speak to God for them. How solemn this part of Divine worship! Let the solemnity of your manner, the holy fervor of your supplications, and the devotional feeling of your heart, be so apparent, that the congregation shall feel that God is really being addressed, and that his blessing is being sought.

VISITING FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE.

Besides preaching the gospel in the Sanctuary, the Master requires that his ministers shall also preach from house to house. This the Saviour himself did. He went through all the cities, towns and villages, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. The

Apostle Paul also taught publicly from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are to follow the example of our blessed Master who *went about doing good*. Christ's ministers—indeed, all his disciples—are to *carry* the gospel to sinners—to their homes. The commission is GO PREACH.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

No special directions are given in the New Testament respecting the constitution of churches. It is rather a matter of example and precedent. From what is recorded, the Church, it would seem, was a natural outgrowth of the necessities of the disciples.

While the Saviour was with his disciples upon the earth, there was, so far as appears in the record, no formal organization of a church. The number of the disciples was

small, and they were under the immediate care and inspection of the Master. The disciples met together even in his absence, but the object was simply worship and conference.

After his ascension, the interests of the Master's cause required a formal organization. This was needed for mutual exhortation, encouragement, and the spread of the gospel which was committed to them. The first recorded *act* of the disciples as an organized body, was the election and ordination of Matthias to the ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell. Acts i. 15-26. And this is mentioned without any allusion to a previous formal organization. Peter simply stood up in the midst of the disciples, the number of whom was then about one hundred and twenty, and addressing them as "Men and brethren," proposed that a choice should be made.

This act was followed by the glorious

outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost which resulted in the conversion of about three thousand souls. These are spoken of as being "added to the Church." Acts ii. 47.

BAPTIZED BELIEVERS ONLY MEMBERS.

The Christian Church, as originally constituted, comprised in its membership only baptized believers. And a scripturally constituted church is one in which only baptized believers are members. According to Christ's appointment, a confession of faith in him is to be made by baptism; and until a believer has put on Christ by baptism, no matter how strong his faith, or consistent his walk, he is not to be received into the membership of any church. Neither are those to be received who, though baptized, exhibit not the spirit of Christ. Not baptized *persons*, but baptized *believers*, are to be of the church of Christ.

This rule does not prevent the recognition of those as brethren in Christ who have not been baptized. The image of Christ must first be discovered before baptism shall be thought of. And all who bear his image are Christ's friends. To enjoy the ordinances of his house, however, and full fellowship with the church, they must conform to the law of Christ, they must be *buried with him in baptism*. Those who refuse, or neglect, thus to conform, *exclude themselves* from the privileges of the church.

CHURCHES SELF-CONSTITUTED.

Any number of baptized believers may organize themselves into a church. Under ordinary circumstances this should be done only when another church of the same faith and order does not exist within a convenient distance. The multiplication of churches unnecessarily should not be encouraged. One strong church is better than several

feeble ones. Members of other churches, before uniting in forming a new church, should obtain regular letters of dismissal from the church of which they are members. To neglect to do this is to walk disorderly.

In organizing a church, it is best to seek the advice of sister churches, whose pastors, and such brethren as they may send, will constitute a council. In this way the sympathy of other churches will be secured, and their assistance also, should it be needed.

FORM OF SERVICES.

No particular mention is made in the New Testament of the form of service adopted by the early Christian church. The Apostles when present doubtless presided, and perhaps led in the services. But it was common for any one who possessed the gift of utterance to exhort on the great subjects of Christ and salvation. Their meetings were mostly those of mutual conference.

The object was to promote each other's edification and usefulness.

In those days, sinners did not as now frequent the house of prayer. They did not come to hear the gospel.

At the present time, churches should have meetings for conference and prayer, that the members may exhort one another. A church cannot thrive without it. But that the gospel may be explained and sinners brought under its influence and power, the form of public worship now common in the churches is proper and requisite. It conforms to the scriptural rule. "Let all things be done to edification."

DEACONS.

When the number of the disciples was largely increased, and the circumstances in which the church was placed, being as sheep in the midst of wolves, were very trying, there naturally arose the need for special offi-

cers to whom could be committed the oversight of the temporal necessities of the members, so that the Apostles might give themselves exclusively to preaching the word. Deacons were accordingly appointed. Of this we have an account in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. They were men of "honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." They were set apart by the laying on of the Apostles' hands.

PASTORS AND BISHOPS.

The special work of the Apostles was missionary labor. They were *sent*, as the term Apostle signifies, and were to be witnesses of the Lord's resurrection. They were to testify to this important fact, of which they all had personal knowledge. In this missionary work, was included a care of all the churches—a general oversight of their interests and welfare. In this oversight they were assisted by the elders in the several

churches. These elders were the more experienced brethren, with whom the Apostles conferred on important matters. This was a very natural arrangement. In time these men were, by the common consent of the brethren, constituted officers, and were formally ordained to the work. Their official work is indicated by the various designations given to them in the word of God. They are called Elders, Overseers, Ministers, Bishops, Teachers, Pastors, and Evangelists. They *all* exercised the gifts which the Holy Spirit conferred, and performed the duties expressed in their designations. There is no scriptural warrant for making one minister superior to another in authority. There are to be no lords over God's heritage. Christ alone is our Master, and we all are brethren.

In the larger churches there were several of these officers; in the smaller churches a less number. As the churches became set-

tled, and the want of proper instruction in the word of God was more felt, pastors were settled over the churches, as at the present time, whose special duty it was to feed the church of God. They preached the word publicly and from house to house.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

The object of a church organization is to hold forth the word of life—to let the light shine. It is necessary, therefore, that each member as he has received Christ should walk in him. Their conduct should be as becometh those who profess godliness. Those who are disorderly, who evidence that they are not sincere Christians, who dishonor Christ, must be purged out that the cause of Christ may not suffer reproach. This work of self-preservation is lodged in the church. While the officers of the church are to have a care over the walk of each member, the exercise of discipline is not their work. It

does not belong to them. *It belongs exclusively to the Church.* The decision of each case, and the infliction of punishment, rests with the church itself.

PROCESS OF DISCIPLINE.

In cases of personal grievance the first step in the proceeding rests with the party aggrieved. He is to go directly to the offender and tell him his fault. And this he must do with a sincere desire and a fixed purpose, if possible, to gain the offending brother; to hear an explanation of his conduct; and, if it be not justified, to labor to bring him to repentance. If the individual effort fails, he is to renew it in company with one or two mutual friends. If this effort is unsuccessful, the matter is to be reported to the church, that justice may be done, and the purity of the church maintained. Before the church, the brother charged with an offence is to be allowed a

fair and impartial hearing; and his condemnation is to follow only upon the clearest evidence of his guilt.

If he repent and make confession, he is to be forgiven. The church must, however, judge whether the offending brother shall be at once restored to full fellowship. In flagrant cases, care should be taken to let the world see that the church will not screen its members, by allowing a professed repentance after discovery to secure from condemnation.

CHURCHES INDEPENDENT.

The churches of Christ are independent of each other's authority. One church cannot rightfully supervise the action of another church. Each church is responsible alone to Christ, the head of the church. Churches should, however, carefully respect each other's discipline.

They may be helpers of each other's joy

by giving Christian counsel and advice. Hence, they may, with great profit, be united together in Associations for mutual help and counsel. The Association has, however, no authority over the churches composing its body. Its want of confidence in the Christian character or action of a church can be manifested only by withdrawing the hand of fellowship from such church.

When a church is in doubt as to the wisest course to be pursued in an emergency, or when general disagreement exists in the membership, or when two churches are at variance, a mutual council, composed of delegates from churches specially invited, may be called. The decision of such council is only *advisory*, and may be adopted or rejected by the church calling the council. Christian courtesy, however, requires that their decision, if impartial, should be received as the combined wisdom of disinterested brethren, and allowed due weight.

There should exist between all the churches a feeling of brotherhood, and interest in the common cause of the gracious Redeemer. And this feeling should be diligently cultivated and promoted by all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

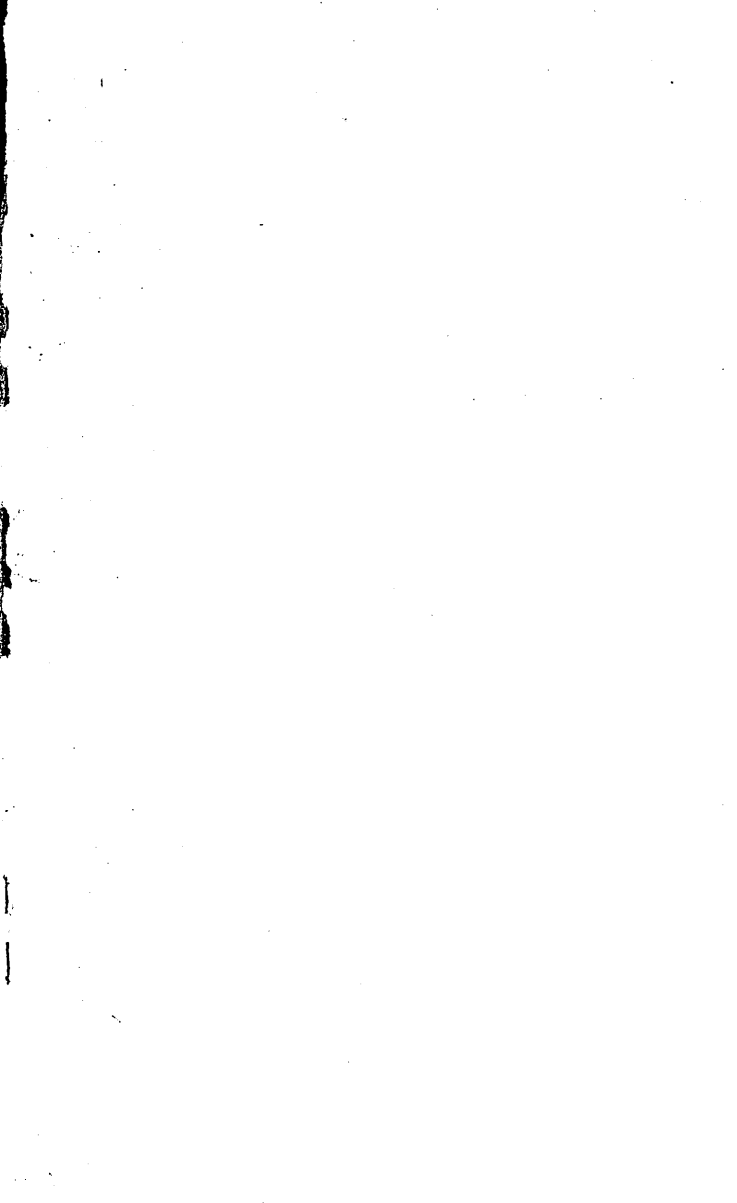
Every church should give special attention to the instruction of the young. The children should be gathered into Sunday schools, and be there carefully taught the truths of the word of God. It will ordinarily be the business of the pastor to see that such schools are established, and to watch carefully over them after they have been organized. Special care will need to be exercised in the selection of superintendents and teachers. They ought to be chosen from among the members of the church. And those believers in Christ should be selected who are most fully qualified for the

task. It is not always the person who knows the most, that is the most apt to teach. The really successful teacher of the young must feel a deep and hearty interest in them; he must be able to bear patiently with their ignorance and slowness and waywardness; and he must have such tact in telling what he knows, as to secure and hold the attention of the children. Further, he should so understand the gospel, that he will not teach the law instead of it, as is too often done, even by well-meaning persons. The pastor will soon see who has, and who has not, such aptness to teach and such fitness for the work. If possible, only such teachers should be selected. If such cannot be found, the pastor will need to teach the teachers, that they may be able to instruct properly the youth under their charge.

CHURCH BIBLE SCHOOLS.

One very ready way to secure proper teachers for the young, is to establish a

Church Bible school. To this school the whole of the members of the church, young and old, may be invited and be taught from the Sacred Scriptures, either by the pastor or by those members of the church who are best qualified for the work. Such schools would secure many advantages. The whole of the members of the church would thus be steadily increasing in the knowledge of the truths of the Bible; and they would be growing constantly thereby. As they became more fully grounded in the truth, they would be more steadfast; and would also be better able to resist the many temptations which they meet; for the word of God is the sound of the Spirit. These benefits every pastor should seek for the members of the church. Moreover, when teachers are needed to instruct the young in the Sunday schools, the Bible school would supply those who had been themselves instructed, and had learned in some degree how to teach others also.





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